

The Effect of Narrative Format and Target Race Attitude
Change about Poverty in College Students

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of narrative format and target race on college students' attitudes towards people in poverty. Previous research designed to educate people about marginalized populations has utilized different mediums such as live instruction, television, and written narratives, and has examined whether participants' empathetic and/or compassionate responses are influenced by these approaches. This research has revealed the importance and the impact of the format, presentation, and content of intervention materials on participant responses to different social groups, which provides a blueprint for how to create attitude change. However, these methods have not been used to examine race and poverty as central themes of analysis. The current study uses a pre-test post-test 2 (Narrative Format: Personal or Impersonal) x 3 (Target Race: White, Black, or Asian) design to measure the effectiveness of transportation to elicit attitude change about people in poverty and whether the amount of attitude change differs by race of the person in poverty.

The Effect of Narrative Format and Target Race Attitude

Change about Poverty in College Students

Recent research has investigated the ways in which narratives, both fictional and nonfictional, have influenced people's understanding of the world around them. Much research has been dedicated to measuring how different forms of narratives induce empathy, compassion, and behavior changes in people through different mediums of communication (Oliver, Dillard, Bae, & Tamul, 2012); however there has not much research dedicated to investigating whether narrative formats produce attitude change with respect to different marginalized social groups, such as individuals in poverty (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Chung & Slater, 2013). Thus, it is important to investigate whether narratives, compared to more impersonal presentations, can produce attitude change toward people from marginalized populations. The current study focuses on race and poverty because these groups have not been examined through the particular lens of narrative format that the current study employs. The purpose of this study is to directly explore the effects of narrative format and target race on attitude change toward poverty.

Transportation

Personal and fictional narratives have the power to induce an unguarded immersion into a story and to increase the reader's emotional involvement in ways that nonfictional or statistical narratives cannot (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Green & Brock, 2000). The reader's experience of being fully immersed into a story as a psychological concept is referred to as transportation: a process that represents the extent to which real-world facts become irrelevant and instead, readers experience significant emotions and motivations when reading a passage. When this happens, readers return from transportation somewhat changed (Gerrig, 1993; 2000). The effects of transportation highlight why personal narratives are important to understanding the plight of

marginalized populations and how it would be possible for attitudes to change after reading a story that had transportive potential. That is, if people are highly involved with a narrative while reading, when they finish the text they may change their attitude toward the group that they read about. Thus narratives have the potential to produce attitude change toward marginalized social groups.

Oliver and colleagues (2012) investigated the effect of narrative versus non-narrative reading format and on evaluations of target social groups (elderly people, immigrants, and prisoners); they assessed participants' empathetic response, compassionate evaluation, and behavioral response toward members of those social groups. Participants were randomly assigned to read and rate one of six different stories in a narrative or non-narrative newspaper story format that varied by target population. After reading the story, participants rated their perception of the story, reported their behavioral intentions (e.g., forward advocacy link to friends/family, willingness to donate), and reported their attitudes toward the target population that they read about. To evaluate participants' behavioral response, at the end of the survey they were given the option to view websites of applicable advocacy organizations. Results showed that transportation was a limited mediator for participants' affective response to the narrative; that is, participants were more likely to respond compassionately to the narrative that they found to be more personally relevant and appealing compared with the non-narrative story. Oliver et al. (2012) also unexpectedly found that when participants read the narrative condition and reported compassion toward the social group that they read about, there was a positive correlation between narrative format and empathetic attitudes. In other words, if participants were compassionate toward the target population that they read about, their empathetic response was increased. Results of the dependent measure of attitudes toward target social group showed that

in the narrative condition participants rated target groups with more favorably than did the non-narrative condition participants. However, only 8% of the participants pursued viewing the advocacy websites that were made available after completing the study. Thus, the findings of this study show that participants who read the narrative condition were more likely to show higher levels of compassion, empathy, and attitude change toward the target group that they read about than participants who read the non-narrative condition, but that doing so did not result in them searching for more information about the target groups.

Attitude and Persuasion Theory

According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993) an attitude is "... a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor." (p. 1). By delving into the psychological realm of attitudes, researchers are able to understand a rich history of why people behave the way that they do. Attitudes reveal a person's values and beliefs; they give a glimpse of deeper thoughts that are not so readily available through casual conversation.

An important reason why social scientists seek to understand people's attitudes is that they are interested in how those values and beliefs can be changed. Attitude change does not occur through a vacuum; people's attitudes can change when they articulately analyze an argument. However, simple strategies can also induce attitude change, particularly when people accept a message at face value. Thus, a distinction can be drawn between systematic and heuristic processing (Bohner & Dickel, 2010). When people are engaged in systematic processing, they are cognitively engaged or have a strong motivation to evaluate a message. In other words, people who engage in systematic processing are more likely to analyze and/or reflect in depth about that message. When people use heuristic processing, they have lower

cognitive engagement or are not motivated to evaluate the message; these individuals are more likely to take the message at face value.

Cacioppo and Petty (1982) have conducted a plethora of research investigating persuasion and attitudes that challenge and build upon the traditional theories about persuasion. Based on this research, they developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which uses seven postulates to explain how persuasion works under different circumstances and offers a guide to how persuasion works. Relevant here are two fundamental concepts within ELM: argument quality and the need for cognition (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Argument quality refers to whether a recipient perceives the message that they are getting as strong or convincing or weak or misleading (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Need for Cognition is defined as "... individuals in their tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking" (Cacioppo and Petty, 1982, p. 116-117). In other words, it is a person's drive or motivation to contemplate ideas. People with a stronger drive for cognition are more likely to find contemplating ideas fun and find problem solving to be satisfying. Given these theoretical concepts, it is then important to consider the message that is being sent to participants when evaluating their attitudes.

Beyond the message that is being sent, it is also important to consider the theoretical backings of the attitudes that people hold. According to Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, and Tagler (2001) there are two important types of attitudes to consider when evaluating attitudes: cognitive and affective attitudes. Cognitive attitudes are 'objective' attitudes that an individual can or does hold about other people or things. They can also be general beliefs that a person can hold about others. Affective attitudes are 'subjective' attitudes that a person can hold, such as the feelings and/or the emotions that they have about someone or about a social group. Cozzarelli et al. (2001) compared Midwestern college students' affective and cognitive attitudes toward people in

poverty and people of the middle class. Results showed that when affective attitudes scores were independently analyzed, attitudes towards the poor were generally positive. However, when cognitive attitude scores toward the poor were compared with attitudes toward the middle class, results showed that participants were significantly more likely to hold negative stereotypes about the poor than the middle class. Results also showed that participants were more likely to make attributions about internal factors (e.g., personal or intrinsic attributes of people) for the cause of poverty in those who were labeled as poor as compared to those who were labeled as middle class. However, Cozzarelli and colleagues (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Tagler and Cozzarelli, 2013) did not examine whether the differences in attitudes on the poor varied by race of the person in poverty. Thus, further research is necessary to explore the interconnected nature of attitudes regarding race and poverty; the relationship between race and poverty is discussed below.

Poverty as a construct is typically explained through the attributions that people associate with those in poverty: individualistic or structural (Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013). Individualistic attribution explains the cause of poverty as a reflection on the person without much regard to his or her environment. For example, those who make individualistic attributions for poverty would associate an unemployed person with words such as 'lazy' or 'unmotivated.' Structural attributions about poverty are just the opposite; in this case, poverty is attributed to the external environment and is not seen as a reflection of the person as an individual. Hence, a person making a structural attribution for poverty would report that the person's unemployment was due to the national economic downturn or economic discrimination. These attributions are supported by research assessing people's attitudes about people in poverty; however there are several other factors to consider such as media portrayal of people in poverty.

Yun and Weaver's (2010) Attitudes Toward Poverty (ATP) scale dissects attitudes toward poverty by measuring affective attitudes toward people in poverty. Affective attitudes are formed through positive or negative feelings and emotions toward something (Fabrigar & Petty, 1999; van den Berg, Manstead, van der Pligt, & Wigboldus, 2006). Yun and Weaver's (2010) work evaluated an existing ATP scale that was considered in previous literature as unidimensional. Their factor analysis showed that there were three subscales to the ATP scale: Personal Deficiency (7 items), Stigma (8 items), and Structural Perspective (6 items). This revised scale is an important factor in synthesizing attitude theory and research on poverty because it allows for multiple aspects of attitudes toward people in poverty to be measured in a single scale.

Race and Poverty

Poverty is an alarming national issue. According to the United States Census Bureau (2014) 46.7 million people (14.8% of the general population) are in poverty. In order to be categorized by the Census Bureau as being in poverty, a person or family must make under a certain annual salary. For example, in the 2015 Medicaid guidelines a family of one would be considered in poverty with the annual salary of \$11,770, a family of two at \$15,930, a family of three at \$20,090, and thus an ascending pattern arises (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). However, this is only a monetary definition of poverty; there are many other considerations and factors that go into the experience of poverty. For example, the impoverished population is at risk for much more than not being able to pay rent; they are also more likely to experience mental or physical health issues, malnutrition, and discrimination and prejudice (Bray & Balkin, 2013). Bringing light to this social issue is important in the psychological community not only for attention to social justice and multiculturalism, but also for considering the attitudes

and psychological constructs that underpin society's understanding of poverty and their support for remedying this problem.

Bullock (2006) explains that single mothers and ethnic minorities are the poster children of poverty in the United States, which brings light to stereotypes and attributions about people in poverty, such as the belief that they are lazy and are responsible for their situation. Bullock also explains that these two target faces of poverty are overrepresented in the media and that this impacts the general public's attitudes and beliefs toward those in poverty as well as policies that affect the impoverished population's well-being. Not only do these depictions create negative stereotypes about people in poverty, but they also create significant cultural divisions between the middle and low class of the United States (Bullock, 2001). Lott's (2002) research also highlights many explanations as to why poverty is viewed through this stereotyped lens: the poor and the middle classes are segregated by geographic divides. She also notes that language choices that those in power used to describe people in poverty (e.g. hillbillies, White trash, inner city kids) create an out-group homogeneity effect.

People tend to view and understand social groups through simple cognitive functions, such as the outgroup homogeneity effect, defined as the tendency to view individuals of social groups that you are not a part of as being very similar in their characteristics and mannerisms while maintaining the understanding that there are many differences between individuals within your own social group (Judd & Park, 1988). This can be exemplified through different social group membership: that is, people are likely to view members of their own race as having much more variability than members of a different race. For example, in a study conducted by Bauer (2001), where participants rated attributes about their own and another target occupational group. It was found that members of occupational groups (e.g., hairdressers, lawyers, doctors, and waiters)

typically reported seeing people of the occupational outgroup in a negative and homogenous manner. However, the participants saw more variability in the members of their own occupational ingroup to have more variability in comparison to the occupational outgroup, and generally viewed their own occupational in-group more positively than the occupational outgroup. Thus, this study gives an example of one social group type, occupation, where people display the outgroup homogeneity effect.

There are several causal reasons for the outgroup homogeneity effect, such as lack of exposure to other groups, understanding the idiosyncratic nature of individuals within your own group, and the natural cognitive mechanism of using stereotypes. Hence, people who are not themselves in poverty are likely to view those who are in the social group of poverty as similar and to hold negative views toward people from lower socioeconomic statuses, and are more likely to see the differences in each individual who is a part of their own socioeconomic status and hold positive views toward those that are a part of their own social group.

Similarly, people's view about those who are in poverty depend on the others' race. Wilson (1996) conducted an exploratory, qualitative study to examine the way that the public explains poverty, how status factors are related to the way that the public describes poverty, and the determinant factors in their explanations. Wilson conducted phone interviews ($N = 246$) with Baltimore, Maryland residents. The respondents were given a list of individual and structural explanations of poverty and were instructed to rate the importance or non-importance of causal explanations of poverty. Results showed that respondents believed African Americans were the primary population that receives welfare and were more likely to cite individualistic beliefs as the cause of welfare. In contrast, participants who believed Whites composed the majority of the homeless population were more likely to make structural attributions about the cause of their

“economic plight.” Wilson also measured respondents’ exposure to the poor with two direct items (e.g. the number of times that a respondent had been panhandled) and with indirect exposure items (e.g., whether respondents had had informal discussions about poverty). Wilson’s results showed significant positive correlations between exposure to impoverished groups and beliefs about the cause of their impoverishment. For example, there was a positive correlation between individualistic attributions and direct exposure with panhandlers and a positive correlation between structural attributions and direct exposure to friendship with a homeless person. The results of this study indicate that the personal experiences (or exposure) that people have with impoverished persons impacts their causal attributions toward poverty.

Current Study

The purpose of the current study is to establish if narrative format and target race have an effect on a reader’s attitude toward poverty. The current study will also explore the effect of narrative type on reader transportation. Previous research has examined disparities in attitudes toward people in poverty that are based on target gender; there has also been limited research comparing beliefs about Black or White people in poverty. However, there is not much research comparing Black, White, and Asian men in poverty. Thus, the current study will attempt to fill a gap in the research to determine if presenting a narrative regarding specific groups and issues, in this case poverty and race, have a significant effect on attitude change.

Hypotheses

H1: Participants will have higher transportation in the White, personal narrative than in the African American or Asian American personal narratives.

H2: There will be low transportation in the African American and Asian American impersonal narrative in comparison to the White impersonal narrative.

H3: There will be low transportation for all impersonal narratives in comparison to the personal narratives.

H4: Attitudes toward poverty will change significantly in the White, personal narrative condition in comparison with the African American or Asian American personal narratives.

H5: Participants will report higher social distance from the African American or Asian American narrative conditions than from the White narrative conditions.

Method

Participants

Participants were Ball State University students enrolled in the Psychological Science Department's subject pool. Participants received research credit for completing the survey. Pre-test and post-test cases were matched by unique identification codes that participants completed at the end of the pre-test and post-test; 159 cases were deleted because the identification code for the pre-test could not be matched with an identification code for the post-test. Forty-three cases were excluded for not completing necessary pre-test scales, and four cases were excluded for not completing the necessary post-test scales. Thirty-two cases were excluded for completing the survey more than once. The final sample contained 101 participants: 48.7% ($N = 76$) identified as female and the average age was 19.82 ($SD = 2.06$). The majority of participants identified as followers of Christianity or a sect of Christianity (63.2%, $N = 66$); 10.7 % ($N = 11$) identified as atheists, 7% ($N = 7$) identified as having other religious beliefs and 16.6% ($N = 17$) participants either did not answer or responded not applicable. Participants remained anonymous through both the pre-test and post-test.

Procedure

This study was designed as 2 (Personal or Impersonal Narrative) X 3 (Target Race: White, Black, or Asian) X 2 (pre-test/ post-test attitudes toward poverty) between-within subjects experimental design. Before both the pre-test and the post-test, participants first electronically signed an informed consent. A week after participating in the pre-test, participants were sent a reminder e-mail asking them to complete the second part of the study. The materials that were used for this study were made available to participants through Ball State University's Sona website. Qualtrics was used as the tool for distributing and collecting data. The following sections will explain the scales that were used in the survey.

Pre-test. Participants reported their ethnic identity, religion, age, gender, college major, and political party affiliation. Next they completed the following pre-test measures: Attitudes Towards Poverty (Yun & Weaver, 2010), Social Distance Scale (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2013) toward different social groups (e.g. people in poverty, people in the middle class, legal immigrant workers, refugees, and people in prison re-entry programs), and a Social Desirability Scale (Paulhaus, 1991). The order of the scales was randomized. After completing the scales the participants created a unique identification code in order to anonymously connect their pre-test with their post-test.

Post-test. Anywhere from a couple of days after to a month after completing the pre-test, participants completed the post-test. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of six different narratives that varied by Narrative Format (Personal vs. Impersonal) and Target Race (White, African American, or Asian American). After reading the narrative participants again completed the Attitudes Toward Poverty scale, the Social Distance Scale, and also completed the Transportation Scale.

Materials

Text materials. The researcher created the texts used for this study. In order to make the articles more relevant to the readers, both narratives focused on the specific issue of poverty induced by the 2008 recession. The personal narrative was a fictitious account of a specific person who was described as White, African American, or Asian American. However, the events depicted were consistent with the experiences people had during the recession (e.g., loss of a good paying job). The race of the main character was mentioned in the beginning of the article and the name of each character and his wife were changed to reflect their ethnicity [e.g. Chuck (White), J'wuan (African American), and Feng (Asian American)]. The information within the impersonal narratives were fictionalized. The impersonal narrative contained non-fiction information about Whites, African Americans, and Asian Americans in poverty induced by the 2008 recession. In the impersonal narrative, the beginning of the article mentioned the racial identity of the group that the article referred to and race was mentioned several times throughout the article. Both versions of the narratives are available in the Appendix A.

Social Distance Scale. Bogardus' Social Distance Scale, originally designed in 1925, has been utilized and revised as a tool to measure intergroup relations (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2013). This scale has been used to episodically evaluate American's attitudes toward 'foreigners', and has yielded significant differences in participants' willingness to associate or be affiliated with a particular group (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Participants were instructed to complete the scale quickly and to identify their immediate feelings towards the groups that they were asked to think about (people in poverty, people in the middle class, legal immigrant workers, refugees, and people in prison re-entry programs), and to rate their feelings using anchors ranging from 1 (*As close relatives by marriage*), to 7 (*Would exclude from entry into my country*). For the current

study, the pre-test reliability analysis yielded an acceptable Cronbach's alphas (pre-test $\alpha = .85$; post-test $\alpha = .87$).

Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale. Attitudes toward poverty were assessed using Yun and Weaver's (2010) 21-item Attitude Toward Poverty Short-Form scale (ATP). Participants answered each item using a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The ATP has three subscales: individualistic or personal deficiency (7 items), stigma (8 items), and structural perspectives (6 items) toward the poor. An example personal deficiency item is, "Poor people are different from the rest of society." An example stigma item is, "An able-bodied person collecting welfare is ripping off the system." An example structural perspective item is, "People who are poor should not be blamed for their misfortune." Yun and Weaver reported a total high level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$) and that each subscale ranged in internal consistency between .50 and .70. The benefit of using this scale instead of Atherton (1993) original is because of the higher level of internal consistency and fewer items, which also measure the multidimensionality of attitudes. For the current study, the pre-test reliability analysis yielded an acceptable Cronbach's alphas (pre-test $\alpha = .87$; post-test $\alpha = .87$).

Transportation Scale. Green and Brock's (2000) 11-item Narrative Transportation Scale was employed; participants answered each item using a rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). This scale measures the primary themes of transportation such as emotional involvement in the narrative (e.g., I found myself thinking of ways the narrative could have turned out differently), cognitive attention to the narrative (e.g., "I was mentally involved in the narrative while reading it"), feelings of suspense, absorption into the story (e.g., "While I was reading the narrative, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind"), and mental imagery (e.g., "While I was reading the narrative I could easily picture the events in it taking

place”; Green & Brock, 2000). Some items were slightly modified, as has been done in previous research, to fit the specific target narrative for this story. Reliability for this scale varies in different studies because of differences in narrative content and context; however, Green and Brock reported a high level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$) with regards to one of their original fictive narrative experiments. The current study yielded an acceptable Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .84$)

Social Desirability Scale. The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding created by Paulhus (1991) was used to measure impression management and self-deceptive positivity. This scale measures how participants view themselves and provides as a check that participants are not over-reporting their own desirable behavior. The scale is divided into two subscales: impression management (17 items) and self-deception (20 items). Three items from the original scale were not used in the current study. An example of self-deception is “I never swear.” An example of self-deception is “I am a completely rational person.” This scale measured participant responses using a 5-point rating scale ranging from (1) *very inaccurate* to (5) *very accurate*. The original scale used a 7-point scale, thus the analyses for the current study differ from how the scale was originally used. Paulhus reported a coefficient alpha range of .68-.80. The current study yielded an acceptable Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .80$) for the total scale, the self-deception subscale ($\alpha = .69$), and the impression management subscale ($\alpha = .70$).

Results

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 and 2 were examined with a two-way between subjects ANOVA, comparing the effect of Target Race and Narrative Type on Transportation. Transportation did not vary significantly as a function of Target Race, $F(2, 95) = 1.11, p = 0.33$. The Target Race X Narrative Type interaction was not significant, $F < 1$. Therefore Hypothesis 1 and 2 were not

supported. Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be low transportation for all impersonal narratives in comparison to the personal narratives. This hypothesis was supported by a significant main effect for story type, $F(1, 95) = 17.45, p < .001$. Participants who read the personal narrative reported greater transportation ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.00$) than participants who read the impersonal narrative ($M = 3.95, SD = 0.88$).

It was hypothesized (Hypothesis 4) that attitudes toward poverty would change significantly in the White, personal narrative condition in comparison with the African American or Asian American personal narratives. This hypothesis was tested with a Target Race x Story Type X Pre/Post-test scores ANOVA on the subscales of the Attitude Toward Poverty scale. None of the interactions were significant, $F_s < 1$. However, there was a significant main effect for pre-test/post-test regarding structural perspective attitudes toward poverty, $F(1, 95) = 52.94, p < .05$. Participants reported more accepting levels of attitudes regarding structural poverty in the post-test ($M = 3.78, SD = .052$) than they did in the pre-test ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.59$). There was a significant main effect for pre-test/post-test regarding stigma towards people in poverty $F(1, 95) = 7.71, p < .05$. Unexpectedly, participants reported a higher level of stigma towards people in poverty in the pre-test ($M = 2.85, SD = 0.68$) than in the post-test ($M = 2.99, SD = 0.67$). The significant results regarding Attitude Toward Poverty are presented in Table 1.

It was hypothesized (Hypothesis 5) that participants would report higher social distance from people in poverty in the African American or Asian American narrative conditions compared with the White narrative conditions. This hypothesis was tested with a Target Race x Story Type X Pre/Post-test scores ANOVA on the subscales of the Social Distance scale. Hypothesis 5 was not supported, $F_s < 1$.

Exploratory Analyses

In order to test the effect of Social Desirability in participant responses, bivariate correlations were computed between each scale for both the pre-test and post-test. The results of the correlational analyses are presented in Table 2 and 3. There was a significant negative correlation between the Social Desirability Self-Deception total score and the Attitude Toward Poverty Structural Perspective total score, $r(100) = -.23, p < .05$ (two-tailed). There was also a significant negative correlation between the Social Desirability Self-Deception total score and the post-test Social Distance scale, $r(100) = -.26, p < .05$ (two-tailed).

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to examine pre-test/post-test scores for the remaining Social Distance measures. Participants were more accepting of the middle class group, people were more accepting at post-test than at pre-test. For the immigrant and refugees social groups, participants were marginally more accepting at post-test. There was no difference for the prisoners social group. Means, standard deviations, and *t* values are presented in Table 2.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of Narrative Format and Target Race on attitude change towards poverty. It was expected that Target Race would have a significant effect on the dependent measures of this study (Attitudes Toward Poverty, Social Distance, and Transportation); however, unexpectedly, target race yielded no significant attitude change and the effect of narrative format did not differ by race of person in poverty. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2, which predicted that participants would have higher Transportation in the White personal narrative than in the African American or Asian American personal narrative were not supported. Hypothesis 4, which predicted that the White personal narrative would have a significant effect on Attitudes Toward Poverty in comparison with the African American and

Asian American Target Race conditions, was also not supported, nor was Hypothesis 5, which predicted that participants who read about African American and Asian American men in poverty would report higher levels of social distance in comparison with the those who read about White men in poverty, was not supported. Hypothesis 3 was supported: participants reported experiencing higher levels of transportation in the personal narrative condition than did participants who were in the impersonal narrative condition.

The results for Transportation are consistent with previous research that has shown that personal narratives are effective tools for attitude change (Oliver et al., 2012). Oliver and colleagues found that cognitive engagement in the narrative, which is an important component of Transportation theory, elicited more affective responses in participants. The current study also found support for the idea that when people read personal narratives they experience higher levels of transportation compared to when they read impersonal narratives.

Cognitive engagement was not directly measured in the current study; however there are two concepts in the attitude and persuasion research that can be compared with the cognitive engagement theme of the Transportation scale. The current study used the Transportation scale to gauge participant involvement in the narrative condition that they read. One of the primary themes in the Transportation scale is cognitive engagement, which is comparable to the concept of Need for Cognition in attitude research (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Future research needs to investigate how these ideas (e.g., Need for Cognition, argument quality, and Transportation) are similar or different in order to better understand how cognitive engagement in a narrative affects attitude change.

A possible reason why there were no differences due to target race is that people do not see people in poverty differently as a function of the race of the person in poverty. In other

words, it is possible that participants did not view the White, African American, or Asian American men as meaningfully different and did not consider their race as they were reading about the impoverished social group. However, it is more likely that no race of target differences emerged because race was not emphasized enough in the narratives. That is, in the personal narrative format, race was mentioned at the beginning of the narrative and the names of the main characters and their wives were changed to reflect their race. The personal narratives were identical other than the racial identity of the character and the main character and his wife's name. Because there was a great deal of contextual information, such as the target's personal job history, and this additional information was the same across conditions, it may have reduced the impact of race on people's perceptions. In general, when contextual information is available, people's social group membership has less of an effect on people's judgments (Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 2001). Similarly, in the statistical narratives, the race of the group that was being discussed was mentioned several times, but the contextual information was again identical and that information may have been more salient than target race. For example, in each impersonal narrative it was stated that, "Of the 712,000 jobs lost from October 2008 to March 2009, half of those were White (African or Asian) Americans with blue-collar jobs." Hence, because the narratives focused on the contextual information regarding explanations of poverty rather than the racial experience of the social group of the impersonal narrative being discussed, the significance of mentioning the racial group throughout the narrative was likely not absorbed by the reader.

It was expected that because the participants were predominately White that participants would hold different attitudes toward poverty based on the race of the person in the narrative that the participants read. That is, the White person should have been seen as an ingroup member and

the Asian American and African American man should have been seen as an outgroup member. However, there was not a statistically significant difference in pre-test/post-test Attitudes Toward Poverty as a function of Target Race. This indicates that the outgroup homogeneity effect did not play a significant role in participants' responses to the dependent measure of Attitudes Toward Poverty. However, it was not possible to look at the results of this study meticulously through the lens of outgroup homogeneity because 11% of the participants identified their ethnicity as non-White. The inclusion of these individuals may have masked an outgroup homogeneity effect. Thus, even though the majority of participants did ethnically identify as White, we found no evidence that this identification affected self-reported dependent measures. This finding is inconsistent with previous research that has found that people tend to report positive stereotypes and responses about White Americans in comparison to African Americans (Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). Hence, as noted earlier, either the narratives did not emphasize target race enough or the participants did not consider target race in the narrative to be an important factor when evaluating their Attitudes Toward Poverty in the post-test.

There is an overall lack of psychological research regarding Asian Americans in poverty. It was expected that the current study would provide insight into attitudes toward Asian Americans experiencing poverty; however that was not the case. According to the Center for American Progress (2014), Asian Americans share the same poverty rate as Whites (12.8%). However, Asian Americans typically are not stereotyped as being in poverty. Asian Americans are more often stereotyped as a model minority, which perpetrates the idea that Asian Americans are academically and occupationally successful across the board (Museus & Kiang, 2009). The idea that all Asian Americans fit into a single mythical trope is problematic, and it highlights the importance of continuing research regarding attitudes toward the diverse population of Asian

Americans. Though the current study did not reveal any significant results regarding attitudes toward Asian Americans in poverty, it is still an idea deserving of further investigation.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the uncontrolled time allotment that participants were able to utilize. Originally, participants were to take the post-test one week after taking the pre-test. However, due to lack of time restrictions on the website platforms that were used, participants took the post-test anywhere from a couple of days or a month after taking the pre-test. Therefore it is possible that there were other variables, such as stories on the news, printed articles, or personal encounters or discussions that could have affected the dependent measures of the post-test scales. For example, during the time period that data collection was going on, the 2016 Presidential election was highly publicized in the news and political issues, such as the wealth disparity in United States, were often discussed in the media. In addition, racial movements, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, were being frequently highlighted in the media at the time that the study was conducted. It is likely that participants heard about these outside variables and this might have heightened their knowledge about and awareness of the widespread poverty in our country.

Social Desirability

The current study found a significant main effect for pre-test/post-test structural Attitudes Toward Poverty; specifically, participants reported more accepting attitudes toward the structural perspective at post-test. This finding suggests that participants' attitudes changed after reading the narrative. However, this finding must be analyzed with caution because of the significant correlation between the structural attitude composite score and the social desirability self-deception composite score. This correlation suggests that people were worried about how they

came across and that concern, instead of attitude change, could explain why their scores were more accepting toward the structural perspective of poverty in the post-test. This raises the possibility that participants believed that they were supposed to respond to the structural perspective items positively and that the changes were not due to the narrative causing true attitude change.

Social distance pre-test/post-test scores about the other social groups should not have changed, but most did even though these other groups (e.g., middle class, legal immigrants, refugees, and people in a prison re-entry program) were not covered in either the personal or impersonal narrative. Those items served primarily as a manipulation check to rule out socially desirable responding. However, at post-test participants reported closer social distance with all the other social groups, except prisoners, compared to the pre-test. That is, there was a statistically significant increase in participants' social distance scores for the middle class social group in the post-test and marginally statistically significant increases scores for the refugee social group. This suggests that social desirability was likely an influential factor in participant's responses on the post-test. Therefore, post-test results should be interpreted with caution.

Finally, the generalizability of this study is limited because responses based on students enrolled in an introductory psychology class. Past research has demonstrated that this population differs significantly from the general population in important ways, including race, socioeconomic status, and level of education (Whitley & Kite, 2013). Future research should examine attitudes toward poverty from samples that better represent the general population.

Future Research

In retrospect, another dependent measure that could have been useful is an exposure measure. Wilson (1996) utilized an indirect (e.g., informal conversations about poverty) and

direct (e.g., an interaction with a person in poverty) exposure dependent measure when collecting data about the public opinion about the causal factors (individual or structural explanations for poverty) in poverty. He found significant differences in the causal factors that respondents reported as a function of direct or indirect exposure to poverty. For example, Wilson (1996) found that for participants who had direct exposure (e.g., a friendship or a formal presentation about) to people in poverty, there was a positive correlation with structural attitudes toward the causal beliefs about poverty (e.g., structural versus individualistic). He also found a significant negative correlation between indirect (e.g., panhandling) exposure and individualistic causal beliefs. Including an exposure dependent measure in the current study might have offered a way to better understand participants' responses. For example, looking at structural versus individualistic views might have offered a way to understand the social distance pre-test/post-test response differences (Table 2) and the pre-test/post-test Attitude Toward Poverty differences (Table 1). Future research regarding race and poverty should include exposure as a dependent measure.

The current study did find interesting results that should be replicated in future research. First, it is important to continue to explore the effect of Transportation on attitude change. The personal narrative condition of the current study exemplified that engaging information can have a significant effect on attitude change. Thus, it is important to continue to investigate this variable. Secondly, it is important to explore the role that written narratives have in attitude change to better understand how education about can produce attitude change. One place where education about race and gender happens is in the classroom; thus it is vital that researchers continue to search for effective ways to facilitate classroom discussions about marginalized populations. Finally, future researchers should test how effective personal narratives can be in

attitude change when the narrative is accurately depicting the social group that is being studied. Specifically, information could be included that more accurately describes the experiences of members of different racial groups who are also in poverty, in comparison with the narratives that were used in the current study that report racial groups as having a uniform experience of being impoverished. The findings of this study show that personal narratives can help students to understand the realities of poverty; therefore implementing this strategy could help students best understand the experiences of the marginalized populations that they learn about in the classroom.

In the current study it was found that attitude change occurred as a function of the personal narrative, which effectively transported the readers. However, this idea should be investigated in more depth. Although responses to the Attitude Toward Poverty structural perspective subscale may have been influenced by social desirability concerns, it is still possible that the narratives did change attitudes. Another important area for future research is an examination of behavioral responses that participants may have after reading personal narratives about social groups. The current study was primarily investigating how narratives effect attitude change; however, there are many other psychological mechanisms at play when investigating attitude change, such as attitude formation, beliefs, and social group membership (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Thus, it is important to conduct research that measures the other psychological mechanisms that could be influenced by transportation in order to better understand how this factor most effectively works to change people's attitudes toward marginalized groups.

The current study did not have an application-based purpose. This means that this study was not conducted in a controlled environment that is similar to a classroom. However, the results of this study suggest that application-based research could reveal effective ways to create

discussion in the classroom. If students are to learn about a marginalized social group, having students' read a more personal or relatable story about a person from that marginalized social group, rather than hearing only statistical or impersonal information about a social group, could be more effective in producing attitude change. For example, having students read a text that tells the first-hand account of an African American woman in poverty would likely be more effective way to teach students about that social group's lived experience than would having students read a psychological journal article. Thus, it is vital to continue to evaluate the most effective ways to educate students about marginalized populations so that they have a realistic understanding of the lives that different social groups lead.

Future research should aim to explore whether target race has a more significant effect if narrative content has more variability. The aim of the narratives current study was to have for content to remain consistent across the narratives, which is why only Target Race was the only information that varied in both the personal and impersonal conditions. Thus, if the narratives were more representative of each target racial group's experience in poverty target race may have a significant effect (Wittenbrink & Judd, 2001). In other words, if the narratives were true to the White, African American, and Asian American experience in poverty instead of a universal experience of a single narrative, target race may have a more significant effect on attitude change toward poverty.

Conclusion

There is a tremendous amount of data that shows that there are racial differences in poverty and that people do not understand the implications of this data. For example, the impoverished population is not only at risk for not being able to afford housing; they are also more likely to experience mental or physical health issues, malnutrition, and discrimination and prejudice (Bray & Balkin, 2013). Bullock (2001) also points out that it is often the most vulnerable people of lower socioeconomic status, such as single mothers and ethnic minorities, that are overrepresented in the media. The attitudes that the general public holds toward people in poverty affects the way that people vote and the policies that are put in place (Bullock, 2001). Lotte's (2002) research shows that people in poverty, especially racial minorities, continue to be discounted, stereotyped, and ignored, however this was not found in the current study. There are several serious limitations to the current study that discount the importance of this kind of research, but vital that future researchers strive to understand how attitudes towards racial groups and impoverished groups function and how they are effected by the mediums (e.g., narratives, television, lectures) that can cause attitude change in the general public.

Tables

Table 1

Means (Standard Deviations) for Attitudes Toward Poverty (N = 101)

	Stigma	N	Structural Perspective	N
Pre-Test Personal	2.82	54	2.55	54
	(0.62)		(0.58)	
Post-Test Personal	3.02	54	3.45	54
	(0.67)		(0.51)	
Pre-Test Impersonal	2.88	47	2.68	47
	(0.72)		(0.6)	
Post-Test Impersonal	2.95	47	3.29	47
	(0.68)		(0.53)	
Pre-Test Total	2.85	101	2.61	101
	(0.68)		(0.59)	
Post-Test Personal	2.99	101	3.37	101
	(0.67)		(0.53)	

Table 2

Paired Samples t-test scores (Standard Deviations) for Social Distance (N = 101)

	Pre-Test	Post-Test	t
Middle Class	1.76 (1.04)	1.48 (.90)	3.42***
Legal Immigrants	3.22 (1.67)	2.96 (1.53)	1.87
Refugees	4.03 (1.87)	3.80 (1.77)	1.84
People in Poverty	3.18 (1.58)	3.25 (1.48)	-.63
Prison Re-Entry	4.13 (1.46)	3.94 (1.44)	1.43

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Correlates of Social Desirability and Attitudes Toward Poverty (N = 101)

	Pre-test Stigma	Pre-test P.D.	Pre-test Structural	Post- test Stigma	Post-test P.D.	Post-Test Structural
Social Desirability Self Deception	.03	-.08	-.23*	.11	-.06	.14
Social Desirability Impression Management	-.11	-.15	.36**	-.63	-.11	-.36**

Note. $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *. Pre-test P.D. is the personal deficiency subscale from the Attitude Toward Poverty scale.

Table 4
Correlates of Social Desirability and Social Distance

	Pre-test Social Distance	Post-test Social Distance
Social Desirability Self Deception	-.17	-.26**
Social Desirability Impression Management	-.10	-.17

Note. $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *.

Appendix A

Personal Narrative

Chuck (Feng, J'waun) was a White (Asian American, African American), middle-class, 30-year old married man with two children. He worked in a trailer factory in Mishawaka, IN and made quite a bit of money by slowly moving up within the company. Chuck had an engineering degree from Purdue, but when he graduated college his family needed his help financially, so he moved home. He ended up settling in Mishawaka, and has now been there for 10 years. His wife, Andrea (Li, Ebony), was a middle school teacher, and they were high school sweethearts. They had a boy (3 years old) and a girl (1 year old). However when the recession hit in 2008, Chuck's family fell apart.

The first thing to go was Chuck's job at the trailer factory. He had stayed at the factory because his boss had promised that he would be able to earn his way into management. Chuck was working his way up the corporate ladder to a management position, however he had not been promoted to a managerial position by the time that the recession hit. Chuck made it through the first few rounds of lay offs within the company, but he was eventually laid off.

"Every one of my friends seemed to be moving back in with their parents. I had moved home to help my parents, but not to live with them. And I moved back quite some time ago... I don't know why I let myself get comfortable in such a job when I had my degree," Chuck sighed. "I know there is nothing I can do now, but I wish I would have never moved home. I would have been able to provide so much more, and actually put my degree to good use."

Soon Chuck could not afford his house or car payments anymore. He and Andrea soon had to start prioritizing the bills that they had to pay. They paid the mortgage, but they struggled with it every month. They began to neglect their car payments, which were only a few months

away from being paid off, but they could not stretch their wallets enough to cover both the cars and the house. However, they did start saving a little money because Chuck could now stay home with the kids while Andrea was at school, so they did not have to shell out \$200 a week for a babysitter.

For Chuck the next 8 months seemed to go by so slowly. He hated not being a provider for his family. Because he was now home so much, this provided more time for him to spend with the family, but he and Andrea began to fight. They had never fought like this before, and Chuck was concerned. However, it seemed like every day she came home mad because of their current situation. One day Andrea came home crying because she had gone to the grocery store to get the family food and the babies diapers and her debit card had been declined. She had tried her credit card, but it was declined too. She then tried to write a check and the cashier said "Lady, I'm sorry, but I am going to have to ask you to leave." Andrea cried while she told Chuck, "Everyone in the line behind me was staring. I had the entire cart filled, Chuck. I can't do this anymore. I just can't."

"I don't know what to do anymore," Chuck said, looking down at his hands, "I was a provider. I thought I was doing the right thing by coming here when I graduated to help my parents. Now I feel like my entire life is in shambles. I've disappointed my wife, my parents can't take me in, I have bills in the mailbox of my house that I don't even go get because I can't pay them. My mortgage just got foreclosed. Even if I do get out of this, my credit is shot. I have no idea what I will do next."

Appendix B

Impersonal Narrative

This narrative explains the experience of many White (Asian, African) Americans during the 2008 recession in the United States.

The Great Recession, fueled by the crises in the housing and financial markets, was universally hard on the net worth of American families. But even as the economic recovery has begun to mend asset prices, not all households have benefited alike, and wealth inequality has widened along racial and ethnic lines.

White Americans are the ones who are taking the brunt of the recession, with unfairly high levels of foreclosures and unemployment. And they weren't doing so well to begin with. At the start of the recession, 33% of the middle class was already in danger of falling to a lower economic level, according to a study by the institute on Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University and Demos, a nonpartisan public policy research organization.

In fact, you could say that the recession for White Americans had begun in 2000. It occurred from 2000 from 2007, as White employment decreased by 2.4% and incomes declined by 2.9%. During those seven years, one-third of White children lived in poverty, and unemployment- even among college graduates- consistently ran about twice the level of most other races in America. It occurred then again, with the rest of America, beginning in 2008. Of the 712,000 jobs lost from October 2008 to March 2009, half of those were White Americans with blue-collar jobs.

White jobs were most likely to be hit by the 2008 recession because the biggest job losses were in the construction, manufacturing (e.g., factories), and service-providing (e.g., retail jobs) industries. In line with such job loss, savings accounts and retirement funds plummeted and

mostly disappeared. According to the Wall Street Journal, during the second quarter of 2009, 70.2% of who had taken out auto loans had their cars repossessed due to missed payments.

Also, financial assets, such as stocks, have recovered in value more quickly than housing since the recession ended. However, White households are much less likely than other racial households to own stocks directly or indirectly through retirement accounts. Thus, White Americans are in a bad position and will not benefit from the recovery of the financial markets.

However, White Americans were more likely than any other racial group to experience home foreclosure and moving back in with their parents during the 2008 recession. They are also more likely than other racial groups to still live with their families. These homeowners were primarily from Generation X (Gen X), which is the generation born from the 1960s to the early 1980s. According to the Pew Research Center, from 2007 to 2012 the number of Gen X living with their parents surged from 32% to 40%.

Those who could move in with their parents during the recession can consider themselves lucky. Three percent of White Americans became homeless due to home foreclosure during the recession. The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports that there was a 30% increase in housing foreclosures from 2007 to 2009, and White Americans that were were the majority demographic of those who lost their homes. They also report that most families tried staying with friends or family before entering a homeless shelter. Overall, White Americans have suffered through the recession and are struggling to get back up on their feet. However White Americans were much more likely than other racial groups to enter the lower rungs of unemployment and poverty, with many families falling under the poverty line.

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